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## VI. DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

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+BHASIN, Veena (nee Sehgal)

--University of Delhi

--Ph.D.

Title: Ecological Influence on the Socio-Cultural System of the Gaddis of Bharmour Sub-Tehsil Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh

Life in the mountains is hard. It is a constant struggle with the uncongenial physical environment. However, the hazards and hardships of life in the mountainous region have never overwhelmed man or curbed his initiative. As a matter of fact these very hardships and hazards have had the contrary effect of bringing out the best in man in terms of adaptive skills and vigour. These two qualities are largely responsible for the self-sufficient economy of the hilly region. The people in the hills and their adaptation to the environment makes an interesting study. Berreman (1960) has identified the 'Pahari' (Hill) culture with distinguished features and he contends that these features have evolved as a consequence of isolation. Cultural changes over time result in increasing divergence.

Since the 'Pahari' culture area shares not only a set of social and cultural features which are in sharp contrast to those of the plains, but also a distinctive physical environment it is reasonable to assume that geographic features may be a major cause of their distinctiveness. In order to test this it was decided to investigate the influence of geo-economic adaptations on socio-cultural systems in the hill area.

The object of the present study is to demonstrate that the environmental conditions in the area under investigation (Bharmour Patwar circle of Bharmour Sub-Tehsil, Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh) constitute a significant factor in the socio-cultural systems of the area (as it exists today). The present investigation is a study in cultural adaptation, in ecological analysis, in the character of economic influence on socio-cultural and behaviour pattern. The level of culture depends on the interrelationship of exploitative or productive technology and environment.

Social relations, technology and environment have been treated as variables which are a part of a system. The three variables are interrelated and interdependent and the functioning of the system changes in response to a change in any one of the variables, e.g. an economic change could have an effect on environment as well as social relations.

The present study attempts an examination and description of those elements of the Gaddi culture which are the result of: (a) the demands of the particular system of food production and (b) culturo-historical influences. The main focus is thus on the system of food production (which includes agriculture and pastoralism), Barton relationship (obligatory assistance), family and social relations, caste structure, religion and the position of women in the society. An attempt has also been made to compare the social relations of Gaddis of Bharmour with those that obtain among certain groups in the North Indian Plains. The comparison however is sketchy because the plains of North India constitute an extremely varied region.

The area selected for the investigation was Bharmour Patwar Circle in Bharmour Sub-Tehsil of Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh. In the Chamba District itself there are three different geographic zones and four major ecological adaptations. In the Himalayas there is clearly a range of possible adaptive adjustment but this range is limited by the physical environment. Once a human group has made a particular techno-economic adaptation, there still remains a certain latitude for socio-cultural variation.

These are the following four adaptations in Chamba. None of these are however totally independent of each other;

- 1) transhumance based on buffalo herding without agriculture as practiced by Muslim Gujjars in Churah and Bharmour;
- 2) transhumance based on goats and sheep with an equal emphasis on agriculture as practiced by the Gaddis and other residents of Bharmour;
- 3) transhumance based on cattle, sheep and goats which is secondary to agriculture as practiced by the people of Northern Churah and Pangri;
- 4) Sedentary farming with limited livestock raising as practiced by the people of Bhattiyat, Chamba and South-West Churah.

The people living in this area are Gaddis. The local inhabitants draw a distinction between the four classes formed by the Brahmans; the Gaddis formed by the union of Rajputs, Khattris, Thakurs or Ranas; the third being constituted by the Sipis and fourth by Reharas and Halis etc. In the Bharmour Sub-Tehsil, instead of the sub-castes following a process of splitting into numerous smaller groups, there is the opposite process of the middle groups of castes amalgamating. This process does not apply to Brahman group, who remain as an endogamous group at the top of the ladder. It does not apply to groups at the bottom of the caste ladder. There is some confusion now-a-days as Brahmans and Sipis are also calling themselves Gaddis, because the Scheduled tribes are entitled to some financial benefits. Gaddis have become a tribe by circumstances, mainly for the purpose of development in view of their social and economic backwardness. The Gaddis are entirely Hindu both in origin and in their social organization. Hindu state in Bharmour was established around the 7th century. The Brahmans and Rajputs are supposed to have arrived around 78--800 A.D., from similar castes on the Punjab plains into a very different ecological situation.

The evidence gathered from Bharmour Patwar Circle is, however, not sufficient to point a theory of social organization vis-a-vis ecological adaptations. Even within the Chamba district there are other, perhaps more hierarchical social organizations which must be studied in depth. A study of the similarities between social organization, land distribution etc., of Bharmour and other parts of Chamba district, and their comparison with corresponding phenomenon in the plains, is likely to provide further proof of a definite correlation between ecological adaptations and social organization.

The Gaddis are an example of the people for whom agriculture, pastoralism and the economic and social values of livestock are all important. They have so far been relatively little affected by the impact of the outside world. In the past their culture and especially the strong individualism it fosters, is intrinsically unreceptive to change; more important, they inhabit country whose environmental limitations restrict the usefulness of western ideas and techniques and the possibilities of change.

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--Ph.D.

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Title: Ayurveda in Nepal: A Medical Belief System in Action

This study documents the ayurvedic medical tradition as it currently exists in urban Kathmandu, Nepal. It reviews conceptual issues in medical anthropology concerning medical systems and distinctions made between disease and illness. It clarifies these concepts and uses them to define ayurveda as a medical system and to explore its role in shaping illness experience and healing activities. The thesis of the study is that ayurveda's forte and one reason for its persistence and continued popularity is its attention to the social and affective aspects of illness in Nepal.



The study describes the context of this ayurvedic system as a pluralistic health care configuration and reveals various patterns of resort to ayurvedic healers within this context. It found eight distinct, extant types of ayurvedic practitioners in Kathmandu City, including midwives, sorcerers, apothecaries, bone-setters, specialists in treating the dying and general practitioners. The study describes each type and typical life histories, knowledge, practices and clienteles of practitioners of each one. In doing so it provides the first ethnographic account of Nepal's ayurvedic tradition.

The final chapters focus on one type of ayurvedic practitioner--the kaviraja--and describe in detail his background, knowledge, approach to diagnosis and therapy, clientele, and clinical interactions with clients. They also present case studies and semantic analyses of two "cultural sicknesses" managed by the kaviraja--leukorrhea and jaundice--and reveal the kaviraja's expertise in interpreting the multiple meanings of these sicknesses and managing their social and affective aspects. Further, the study describes and compares explanatory models for these sicknesses expressed by kavirajas with those expressed by their clients and with those conveyed in Sanskrit medical texts and notes interesting discrepancies and consistencies.

In the dissertation's appendices appear a number of ayurvedic medicinal formulae used in Nepal and a list of 163 of their botanical ingredients. Voucher specimens of these substances were collected by the author and deposited at the University of Wisconsin Herbarium.

The data for this study were collected during thirteen months (1980-81) of fieldwork by the author among ayurvedic practitioners and their clients in Kathmandu, Nepal.

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--Ph.D.

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Title: International Planning and Health: An Anthropological Case Study of Nepal

This anthropological study of the relationship of social and cultural information to health planning by national and international agencies is based on the premise that health services are most effective when tailored to the needs of particular populations. As a test case, the planning process for Nepal's Integrated Community Health Program was examined from the international to the village level to understand what social and cultural information is used or is perceived as being useful to those who plan rural health services.

The history of health aid to Nepal shows the shift in international policy, with limited success, from one to another all encompassing solution for health problems. The present priority among foreign agencies is primary health care which is now the focus of Nepal's integrated rural health services.

This study raises crucial points about the nature of organizations, their influence on the bureaucrats who work within them and on those who are affected by the product of their efforts. Donor agencies are caught in their own bureaucracies -- by the organizational structure, planning and funding procedures, and organizational and personal goals which influence perceptions of planning and the evaluation of programs. Such bureaucratic obstacles lead health planners to view social and cultural information as irrelevant for meeting their needs. The information used in health planning represents the values and culture of the foreign planners, rather than the culture of the intended local recipients. The completed plans often chart a course of action which has more to do with meeting the organizational needs than the beneficiaries of Nepal's health services.

For anthropologists who want to know how to use their skills to help better planning to meet local priorities, there is no easy answer. As seen by the examples discussed in this study, even common cultural knowledge is ignored by decision-makers. The availability of information does not determine its utilization. As long as bureaucratic structure and donor agency goals remain unchanged, social and cultural information about people at the grass roots will have no impact on planning.

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--Ph.D.

--Stanford University, 1980

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Title: Person, Action and Causation in a Bhote Ethic

In Chapter One, Tsum and Tsumbas are located geographically and ethnographically. Tsumbas' ecology and contemporary changes in their trade are described. Tsum is considered from Tsumbas' viewpoint, raising matters of ethics and world view. Tsum as an out-of-the-way place is apotheosized in the Hidden Country, a millennial refuge, and the dialectic between these two concepts of Tsum parallels Tsumbas' moral ambivalence towards their pious yokel self-image.

Chapter Two deals with Tsumbas' concept of the good person, chiefly in terms of friendship. The central meaning of friendship, its boundaries and its opposites reveal the importance of reciprocity and the relationship between claims and obligations. Hospitality is considered as an important application; witchcraft and poisoning illustrate the importance and principles of hospitality. Privacy is considered as both a qualification and an essential aspect of friendship. The discussion is generalized in terms of 'face,' a comprehensive concept for organizing the process of interpersonal social life.

Chapter Three is a study of Tsumbas' two careers, the lay life and the religious. Both brotherly and parental love are investigated. The household is identified as the main focus of lay people's loyalties. Other important principles are studied in terms of their subordination to household goals: age over youth, corporateness of patrilineal clans, and the subjection of women. Marriage, sexuality, and the sexual double standard are examined, and then the topic of monasticism is introduced by a discussion of celibacy. Monasticism is examined both in terms of soteriological goals and of ethical standards. These are also related to concrete rewards of monastic life. Finally lamas are considered, including the sources of Tsumbas' adoration for them and the peculiar ethical position they occupy, which is illustrated by an investigation of ghosthood.

Chapter Four reorganizes everything into abstract causal categories. First is karma, examined as a system with emphasis on the importance of humanity in it. Important acts of merit (not taking life, not taking what is not given, and not lying) are investigated to show how Tsumbas integrate karmic considerations with other aspects of their ethic. The second general concept is kyen, accident or supernatural causation. This is treated as a causal system in its own right, with major emphasis on the concept of pollution. It is also evaluated as to its Buddhist significance, by considering its relationship to karma. Finally, the idea of layo is introduced. This difficult concept, which embraces karma while giving it a more properly Buddhist moral, serves to summarize major themes of the four chapters.